U.S. Visitors To Soviet Union Probed by FBI

By Morton Mintz
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The FBI investigates students, teachers and scientists who spend a month or longer in the Soviet Union, according to an internal memo dated Nov. 17, 1969.

The purpose of the investigations, the memo says, "is to identify them and determine whether any of them have been approached for recruitment by the Soviet Intelligence Services."

A cursory check by The The Washington Post showed that if such investigations are in fact made, it is rare for the subject to be interviewed or for him to learn of the investigation.

The document was one of those stolen from the FBI office in Media, Pa., and sent anonymously to The Washington Post on March 22.

At the time, on advice of counsel, portions of that document and of others, as well, were not published.

On Tuesday, the Harvard Crimson, saying it had received copies of the same documents from "Resist," a draft resistance organization, published them in their entirety, "except for the removal of the names and numbers in cases which might be harmful to those who have been spied upon."

The Cambridge, Mass., newspaper displayed the documents under the headline, "A Revealing Look at the FBI Spy Operation."

Yesterday, this reporter put several specific questions about the directive to investigate academic visitors to the FBI. A spokesman declined to comment.

The memo, addressed to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, apparently was originated by the Washington field office. It told of a woman student who went to Moscow and registered with the U.S. Embassy "as an American citizen visiting the U.S.S.R."

The memo said her registration card "was received" from the State Department, "along with other registration cards classified 'Confidential.'"

The State Department was asked yesterday whether it has an arrangement with the FBI to forward such materials. The department had no immediate comment.

The memo recalled an earlier instruction "that students, teachers, and scientists who were in the U.S.S.R. at least one month who have not previously been investigated should be selected for investigation."

The memo gave no clear indication of how comprehensive such an investigation might be. It did note, however, an earlier instruction to check U.S. passport records and to forward results to the FBI "office of origin"—the office in the area where a person who visited the Soviet Union lives.

"The office of origin should consider the Soviet objective of recruiting American citizens who either now or at some future date, will likely be employed by the United States Government or strategic industrial facility," the memo said.

"Interviews of these individuals should only be done after

Bureau authority . . . has been obtained," the memo added.

In 1969, the State Department said yesterday, 254 Americans classified as senior scientists, students and graduate students and teachers went to the Soviet Union and, in most or all cases, stayed at least a month.

In these cases where the FBI authorizes special agents to interview a particular individual, "they should delineate to the individual the Bureau's responsibilities in the field of internal security, espionage and related matters," the memo said.

In some cases, at least, the FBI is known to attempt to learn from returned travelers such information as the identity of Russians they met and the nature of their relationships (a Russian's request for a book could be the nucleus of a recruitment effort, as the FBI is understood to see it), and whether the visitors, while in Russia, may have been entrapped in some embarrassing situation that Soviet intelligence might try to exploit some day.

The FBI memo went on to say, "Utmost care must be exercised in conducting these investigations to prevent any embarrassment to the Bureau and possibly jeopardize the Bureau's program in countering Soviet Intelligence Services recruitment of students. The motives of the Bureau in investigating American students, professors, and scientists must not be construed as infringements of the American educational system and the pursuit of intellectual freedom."

In the academic community, a spot inquiry by The Washington Post indicated that the FBI directive for investigations was unknown, and that interviews of the kind described in the memo were rare or unheard of.

Bertram H. Davis, general secretary of the American Association of University Professors, emphasizing that he has no proof that the memo is authentic, "or that any action of the kind described in it has ever been taken," said his group is "in no position to express any judgment."

He added, however, "We would think it especially deplorable for particular groups such as students, professors and scientists to be singled out for investigation by a government agency."

Mathetmatician Jeremy J. Stone, executive director of the Federation of American Scientists, also was concerned lest academics were being singled out, but, speaking for himself, said he couldn't "work up much of a sense of outrage over the fact that the FBI does, in fact, question people."

In New York City, George W. Phillips, a junior fellow in Russian history at Columbia University's Russian Affairs Institute, said the FBI never contacted him although he was in Moscow from August, 1969, to July, 1970. He said he had been unaware of FBI procedures as stated in the memo but remarked, "I can't say that I'm really all that surprised to hear about it."